

CLAIM LISTING

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Claims 1 through 10 (Canceled).

11. (Currently amended) A tampon applicator assembly comprising:

a barrel having an insertion tip area with an insertion tip, a tapered main section adjacent said insertion tip area and a finger grip adjacent said tapered main section and opposite said insertion tip area, said insertion tip area having a taper that decreases from said tapered main section to the insertion tip, said tapered main section being tapered from said finger grip toward said insertion tip, said tapered main section having a maximum outer diameter located closer to said finger grip than to said insertion tip, said finger grip having a shoulder region adjacent to said tapered main section, a gripping region adjacent to said shoulder region, and a flared region adjacent to said gripping region opposite said shoulder region, said barrel decreasing in diameter in said shoulder region from said tapered main section to said gripping region so that said gripping region has a smaller diameter than said tapered main section~~an outer diameter, said barrel has a flared region adjacent to said finger grip that extends to an end of said barrel opposite said insertion tip, said flared region has a flared maximum outer diameter at said end, said flared maximum outer diameter is about 10 percent to about 30 percent larger than said outer diameter of said finger grip;~~

a plunger being slidably received in said barrel; and

a pledget being disposed in said barrel so that a force applied on said plunger expels said pledget from said barrel at said insertion end.

12. (Previously presented) The assembly as in claim 11, wherein said maximum outer diameter is located from said insertion tip about 55% to 85% of an overall length of said barrel.

13. (Previously presented) The assembly as in claim 12, wherein said maximum outer diameter is located from said insertion tip about 60% to 75% of said overall length

of said barrel.

14. (Previously presented) The assembly as in claim 11, wherein said tapered main section has a main section taper ratio of about 1.07 to about 1.15.

15. (Previously presented) The assembly as in claim 14, wherein said tapered main section taper ratio is about 1.08 to about 1.13.

16. (Original) The assembly as in claim 11, wherein said insertion tip further comprises a plurality of petals.

17. (Original) The assembly as in claim 11, wherein said insertion tip has a taper ratio of between about 0.66 and about 1.6.

18. (Original) The assembly as in claim 17, wherein said taper ratio is between about 0.7 and about 0.9.

19. (Original) The assembly as in claim 16, wherein said plurality of petals have a petal length-to-width ratio of about 0.8 to about 3.

20. (Original) The assembly as in claim 19, wherein said petal length-to-width ratio is over about 2.

Claims 21 through 24. (Canceled)

25. (Currently amended) The assembly as in claim ~~[[21]]~~11, wherein ~~said finger grip has a gripping region disposed between a first region and a second region, said first and second shoulder and flared regions each having~~ have an outer diameter that is about 10% to about 30% larger than an outer diameter of said gripping region.

Claims 26 through 30. (Canceled)

31. (Currently amended) ~~A tampon applicator~~ The assembly comprising of claim

11, wherein

~~a barrel having an insertion tip area with an insertion tip, a tapered main section adjacent said insertion tip area and a finger grip adjacent said tapered main section and opposite said insertion tip area, said insertion tip area having a taper that decreases from said tapered main section to the insertion tip, said insertion tip having has a plurality of petals and a taper ratio of more than about 0.66;~~

~~a plunger being slidably received in said barrel; and~~

~~a pledget being disposed in said barrel so that a force applied on said plunger opens said plurality of petals to expel said pledget from said barrel at said insertion end.~~

Claims 32 and 33. (Canceled)

34. (Currently amended) The assembly as in claim ~~[[31]]~~11, wherein ~~said finger grip has a gripping region disposed between a first region and a second region, said gripping region having an outer diameter of said gripping region that is smaller than an outer diameter of each of said first and second regions~~ flared region.

Claims 35 and 36. (Canceled)

37. (Currently amended) ~~A tampon applicator~~ The assembly comprising: of claim 11, wherein

~~a barrel having an insertion tip area with an insertion tip, a tapered main section adjacent said insertion tip area and a finger grip adjacent said tapered main section and opposite said insertion tip area, said insertion tip area having a taper that decreases from said tapered main section to the insertion tip, said insertion tip having has a plurality of petals, and wherein said plurality of petals ~~having~~ have a petal length-to-width ratio over about 2 to about 3;~~

~~a plunger being slidably received in said barrel; and~~

~~a pledget being disposed in said barrel so that a force applied on said plunger opens said plurality of petals to expel said pledget from said barrel at said insertion end.~~

Claims 38 through 43. (Canceled)

44. (Previously presented) The assembly as in claim 11, wherein said tapered main section is tapered linearly from said maximum outer diameter to said insertion tip area.

45. (Canceled)

46. (Previously presented) The assembly as in claim 11, wherein said plunger has a plunger main body between a plunger first end and a plunger second end, and wherein said first end has a first outer diameter that is larger than a main outer diameter of said main body.

47. (Currently amended) The assembly as in claim ~~[[11]]~~46, wherein said second end has a gradual enlargement or taper from said main body that is greater than said main outer diameter.

48. (New) The assembly as in claim 11, wherein said plunger has a plunger main body portion between a plunger first end and a plunger second end, and wherein said plunger main body portion has a plunger main body diameter that is less than said diameter of said gripping region so that said plunger main body portion is movable through said gripping region to expel said pledget from said barrel.

49. (New) The assembly as in claim 11, wherein said flared region has an outer diameter that is about 15% larger than said diameter of said gripping region.

50. (New) The assembly as in claim 11, wherein said flared region has an outer diameter that is about 25% larger than said diameter of said gripping region.

51. (New) The assembly as in claim 11, wherein said flared region has an outer diameter that is increases from said gripping region to an end of said barrel opposite to

an end of said barrel having said insertion tip.